



ASTUR APPROXIMANS Vig & Horsf.

W. Gould and H. C. Richter del.

C. Hullmandel imp.

ASTUR APPROXIMANS, *Vig. and Horsf.*

Australian Goshawk.

Falco radiatus, Temm. Pl. Col. 123, young.

Astur radiatus, Vig. and Horsf. in Linn. Trans., vol. xv. p. 181, young male.

Astur fasciatus, Ib., adult male and female.

Astur approximans, Ib., young female.—Gould in Syn. Birds of Australia, Part III.

Bilbil, Aborigines of New South Wales.

AMONG the whole perhaps of the Australian birds, certainly among the Australian *Falconidæ*, we are presented with no species the scientific appellation of which is involved in so much confusion as is that of the present bird. This confusion has arisen from two causes: first, authors have erroneously considered it to be identical with the *Falco radiatus* of Latham, from which it is entirely distinct; and secondly, the difference which exists between the plumage of the adult and young is so great as to have led to a false multiplication of species, and consequently of specific names. Seven specimens of this Hawk form part of the collection of the Linnean Society, and are those from which Messrs. Vigors and Horsfield took their descriptions of *Astur radiatus*, *A. fasciatus* and *A. approximans*: on a careful examination of these specimens, I am satisfied that they are all referable to the present bird; *A. radiatus*, of which there are two specimens, being the young male; *A. fasciatus*, of which there are three specimens, the adult; one an adult male, the other two adult females; and *A. approximans*, of which there are two specimens, the young female. I have retained the term *approximans* in preference to either of the others, because *radiatus* actually belongs to another species, and the employment of *fasciatus* might hereafter lead to its being confounded with the "Fasciated Falcon," an Indian species described under that name by Dr. Latham.

From the number of synonyms quoted above, it might readily be supposed that this bird is very common, and such is in reality the case, for it is one of the most abundant and generally dispersed of the Hawks inhabiting New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land. It is a species which ranges pretty far north, but on the western coast its place appears to be supplied by the *Astur cruentus*. The country between South Australia and Moreton Bay may be considered its true habitat; and there it is a stationary resident.

The Australian Goshawk is a bold, powerful, and most sanguinary species, feeding upon birds, reptiles, and small quadrupeds. It may often be seen lurking about the poultry-yard of the settler, and dealing destruction among the young stock of every kind; daring when at large, and morose and sullen when captured, it never becomes tame and familiar like the true Falcons, but retains its ferocity to the last.

Its nest is usually built on a large swamp-oak (*Casuarina*), growing on the side of a brook, but I have occasionally met with it on the gum-trees (*Eucalypti*) in the forest at a considerable distance from water; it is of a large size, and is composed of sticks and lined with gum-leaves. The eggs are generally three in number, of a bluish white, smeared over with blotches of brownish buff; they are one inch and ten lines long by one inch and five lines broad.

The male, which is considerably less than the female in size, has the crown of the head and nape of the neck leaden grey; on the back of the neck an obscure collar of rufous brown; the remainder of the upper surface, wings and tail deep greyish brown; the latter numerous barred with brown of a deeper tint; inner webs of the primaries and secondaries greyish white, barred with dark brown; throat greyish brown; breast and all the under surface rufous brown, crossed with numerous white fasciæ, which are bounded on each side with an obscure line of dark brown; thighs rufous, crossed by numerous irregular white lines; irides bright yellowish orange, surrounded by a yellowish lash; inside of the mouth blue, except the centre of the roof, which is black; gape and base of the bill olive-green, interspersed with hair-like feathers; tip of the cere greenish yellow; base of the mandibles pale blue; culmen and tips black; legs and feet yellow; claws black.

The young differ considerably from the adult, having the feathers of the head and back of the neck dark brown, margined with rufous brown; the remainder of the upper surface deep brown, each feather with a crescent-shaped mark of rufous at the extremity; tail brown, crossed with obscure bars of a darker tint, and tipped with whitish brown; inner webs of the primaries fawn-colour, barred with dark brown; throat buffy white, with a stripe of dark brown down the centre of each feather; breast buffy white, each feather crossed by two bands of dark brown, the last of which assumes a triangular form; abdomen and flanks buffy white, crossed by irregular bands of dark brown, which are blotched with rufous brown in the centre; thighs and under tail-coverts pale rufous, crossed by similar bands; irides beautiful yellow; cere, base of the bill and gape bluish lead-colour; point of the bill blackish brown; legs gamboge-yellow.

The Plate represents an adult male and female of the natural size.